

The Identities of Characters and Mirror Imagery in *Twelfth Night*

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Introduction

This thesis analyzes the image of the mirror in *Twelfth Night, or What You Will* (ca.1601-02) written by William Shakespeare. In this play, the word “glass” reminds us of the mirror image, and it has mainly two attributions: one is to reflect only the outside of objects, and the other is to arouse interest in a person’s mind mysteriously. Throughout history, the mirror has always been connected with these two definitions, and Shakespeare also used them in his plays frequently. In *Twelfth Night*, these images are relevant to the main incident, which causes the misunderstanding of identities both of Viola, who is the disguised heroine, and of Sebastian, who is her twin brother.

The word “glass” appears in Viola’s lines that refer to the similarity of appearance between herself and her twin brother, Sebastian:

I my brother know
Yet living in my glass; even such and so
In favour was my brother, and he went
Still in this fashion, colour, ornament,
For him I imitate. (III. iv. 330-34)

Viola, who survives a shipwreck and drifts ashore in Illyria, disguises herself as Orsino’s page Cesario to protect her woman’s body in the unknown place, Illyria. In disguise she is the living image of her brother Sebastian, for she imitates his “fashion”, “colour” and “ornament.” Because of her disguise, Viola and Sebastian overlap and they seem to be the same person in “appearance” like a person who is reflected in a “glass.” It brings about her suffering which is caused by a gap between her feminine identity as Viola and

her masculine identity as Cesario. And the disguise also makes another gap between Viola and the Illyrian people because they misunderstand twins; Viola's and Sebastian's identities are equated by others while she disguises herself as Cesario. In addition, in this paper, Viola's disguise will be compared with Olivia's, who is a countess of Illyria. Thus mirror images are important when we consider Viola's identity which is mistaken as Sebastian's by the Illyrian people, such as Orsino, Olivia, Malvolio, Maria, Sir Toby and Sir Andrew. I will discuss in this study how their misunderstandings relate to their identity problems in the end of this play.

The first section explains the significance of "appearance" for the people in Illyria. Viola pretends to be a boy Cesario who has the same appearance as Sebastian when she is disguised, but she never becomes Sebastian. According to the equation by others, however, she is identified with Sebastian, and besides a new personality Cesario is created. Thus the section verifies how the Illyrian people only rely on the appearance of a person, and considers the identities of Viola, Sebastian and Cesario.

The second section refers to what things the mirror reflects when everyone realizes that Cesario is actually Viola. In the ending, Orsino says "the glass seems true" (V. i. 249), but Illyrian people do not notice the "true" meaning that Viola and Sebastian have different inner minds. Through the analysis of the behaviors of Illyrian People, this section considers the characters of Viola, Sebastian and Cesario along with the miraculous reunion of twins.

Using the two definitions of how mirrors mean, this paper studies how the characters have a gap to perceive the identity of Viola, Sebastian and Cesario. In addition, I will analyze the cause of misunderstanding of identity, by examining the mirror relationships between Viola and Sebastian, and that between Viola and Olivia.

I

"I am not what I am" (III. i. 129)

This section discusses the importance of the Illyrian people, through their misunderstanding of the twins, Viola and Sebastian. Their confusion shows how the

Illyrian people emphasize the appearances of persons than their identities.

Viola's disguise as her "twin brother" Sebastian is the most essential point when we consider her suffering the gap between her appearance and inner mind. Twins have appeared in many myths and literary works from antiquity on wards. Especially opposite-sex twins are always related to "an original unit which has split, a unit destined to be reunited by sexual love, the symbol of human conjoining" (Heilbrun 34). They are often described as identical twins in many stories and they suggest incest. Viola who disguises herself as her twin brother reminds us of the myth of Narcissus. He is famous for the story in which he loves himself reflected in the pond and finally he metamorphoses into a narcissus. Moreover, Penny Gay notes that Pausanias mentions another version of Narcissus' story (23). Pausanias writes:

Narkissos had a twin sister, they were exactly the same to look at with just the same hair-style and the same clothes, and they even used to go hunting together. Narkissos was in love with his sister, and when she died he used to visit the spring; he knew what he saw was his own reflection, but even so he found some relief in telling himself it was his sister's image. (Pausanias 376)

Narcissus' feelings waver between incest-love and self-love, for he loves his twin sister through his own face. This can be linked with Viola's disguise because she also feels the presence of her twin brother through her face and fashion. As she says, "I my brother know / Yet living in my glass," her twin brother lives in her "glass" because she imitates his "fashion, colour, ornament" (III. iv. 330-334). This "glass" means her face or her whole body in the same fashion as the image of Narcissus reflected on the pond's surface does, and she connects her own face with Sebastian's face. It contains her love for her brother who she thought had died in a shipwreck. This is similar to Narcissus' story.

The twins show us their similar appearances on the stage. We can easily imagine two persons who have the same appearance when we hear the word twins. Shakespeare wrote two plays using twins: *Twelfth Night* and *The Comedy of Errors*. Both comedies have occurrences caused by the error of twins' same appearance, and it is derived from the outer similarity of their appearance, not from the similarity of their internal mind.

This indicates that twins are surely different persons from each other, but they can be seen as the same persons. That is to say, twins' identities can be considered as the same. In Viola's case, she changes only the outside appearance deliberately, so Illyrian people can easily misunderstand twins.

Besides, the root of confusion in this play is that Viola and Sebastian are identified with each other by the Illyrian people when the twins meet the inhabitants of Illyria separately. This is most noticeable in Act IV. In this act, Sebastian meets Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek after the quarrel with Feste, and their encounter brings about a blow. Then Sebastian says, "draw thy sword" (IV. i. 35). In this scene, they do not suspect the difference of the characters between Sebastian and Viola, although he has a more warlike personality than she who is pacifist as she says, "I am no fighter" (III. iv. 204).

Moreover, after their encounter, Sebastian meets with Olivia, who is rejected by Cesario. From their first encounter, Olivia takes him for Cesario, and they promise to become engaged in Act IV, scene iii. In spite of the sudden change of Cesario's mind, Olivia does not notice the difference between Viola and Sebastian, and she progresses with their engagement. Thus, it shows us how Illyrian people are sensitive to appearance, and it recalls the nature of mirror which reflects only the outside of twins. They only see the outside of Viola and Sebastian, and it is to say that they are so subjective.

In the beginning of the play, Viola asks Captain for help to change her appearance in the unknown place:

There is a fair behaviour in thee, captain,
And though that nature with a beauteous wall
Doth oft close in pollution, yet of thee
I will believe thou hast a mind that suits
With this thy fair and outward character. (I. ii. 47-51)

She says there are differences between mind and outward character. It suggests that she never assimilates her inner self into her twin brother even if she disguises herself as him.

Therefore, she expresses her mind as a girl to Orsino as follows: "Too well what love women to men may owe" (II. iv. 101). In addition, she tells aside in the scene of the duel with Sir Andrew Aguecheek in Act III as follows: "A little thing would make me tell / Them how much I lack of a man" (III. iv. 255-256). She is always a girl even when she disguises herself as a boy, and is different from her twin brother Sebastian who "broke" (V. i. 164) Sir Andrew's head. Moreover, as Huston proves, she is not Sebastian:

She does not . . . assume her brother's name, because she is not trying to obliterate her own feminine identity; she is not trying to become Sebastian.
(285)

Her imitation is only the outside part, and it is to protect her against danger at an unknown place (Parker 26). No one can infringe her own identity, however, and she is seen as a boy page from others, and is confused with Sebastian by Antonio in Act III. Furthermore, she suffers from a problem that she cannot open her mind to Orsino who she loves, while she disguises herself in Act II. She is troubled with a gap between outer character and inner mind because of her disguise.

Due to the equation of Viola and Sebastian, they become one person Cesario for Illyrian people. At the same time, we can recognize the character of Cesario on the stage, because Cesario actually exists as the boy who is the page of Orsino and Olivia's husband. And she/he is also the person who sometimes says "I am no fighter" and sometimes shouts "draw thy sword" for Illyrian people. Leggatt discusses about Cesario's personality:

In other comedies a single personality is extended by disguise, but the extension is temporary and finally withdrawn; this is the only case in which the new figure created by disguise has also an objective reality, a life of its own. (247-248)

Cesario is created by misunderstandings. For Orsino, for example, Cesario is the person who was a faithful page but betrays Orsino to become engaged to Olivia. For Olivia,

Cesario is Orsino's page who has denied her courtship, and in Act IV she/he accepts Olivia's love. In addition, for Sir Andrew and Sir Toby, she/he was "a coward" but finally she/he becomes "the very devil incarnate" (V. i. 168-69). Moreover, for Maria and Malvolio who meet only Cesario who is disguised by Viola, she/he is just a page of "very well-favoured" and "very shrewishly" (I. v. 133) speaking. King says that "Cesario is both Viola and Sebastian" (6). There is no person who finds the twins' minds different, and therefore the mistakes happen. Cesario is Cesario for the Illyrian people, and no one can discover the distinction of the inner characters of Viola and Sebastian.

This shows us how Illyrian people think highly of appearance. They do not consider the inside personalities of persons. Especially in the case of the love of Orsino and Olivia, they emphasize the things which are reflected in their eyes. Orsino mentions his first awareness to love for Olivia as follows:

O when mine eyes did see Olivia first,
Methought she purged the air of pestilence;
That instant was I turned into a hart,
And my desires, like fell and cruel hounds
E'er since pursue me. (I. i. 19-23)

So Orsino fell in love with her when his "eyes did see Olivia". Moreover, he also says:

I hold as giddily as fortune;
But 'tis that miracle and queen of gems
That nature pranks her in attracts my soul. (II. iv. 80-82)

His soul is attracted by her figure which is "pranked" or dressed up, and that is to say, he is attracted by her outside. His love is fancy made by Olivia because he only sees her unreal image. He mentions her tender mind as in the following line, but it is just her camouflaged figure: "O she that hath a heart of that fine frame / To pay this debt of love but to a brother" (I. i. 33-34). In Olivia's case, it is obvious that she decides to meet Cesario because she hears the explanation of her/his attractive appearance from Malvolio

as “Not yet old enough for a man, nor young enough for a boy” (I. v. 130), although she denies meeting anyone else. And then she loves him her with eyes:

Methink I feel this youth’s perfections
With an invisible and subtle stealth
To creep in at mine eyes. (I. v. 251-53)

Cesario’s perfect appearance is reflected in her eyes, and it causes love for him. Her eyes fell in love before her mind feels it: “Mine eye too flatterer for my mind” (I. v. 264). Leggatt refers to the love of eyes as follows: “Love at first sight, love coming through the eye” (234). The significance of appearance for Orsino and Olivia is great because the thing which is reflected in the eyes mirrors and controls their mind.

In Act V, the Illyrian people do not care to notice Cesario’s change. When they are at variance about Cesario’s position, there happens a terrible turmoil. Olivia cries, “How am I beguiled!” (V. i. 128) and Orsino shouts, “O thou dissembling cub!” (V. i. 153) with anyone who does not know the truth that Viola and Sebastian are twins. Viola’s real identity is ignored. And everyone only believes that Cesario makes Orsino and Olivia angry by her/his falseness for their love or loyalty. Viola’s appearance and inner mind, and Sebastian’s appearance and inner mind are equated and mixed, so no one finds out their inner differences. Through the tumult based on mistake, we can see how the Illyrian people are influenced by the appearance, and they do not notice the truth in their misunderstandings of twins’ identity.

II

“the glass seems true” (V. i. 249)

The first section proved that the Illyrians are affected by the appearance of the twins. This section compares Viola’s disguise with Olivia’s and considers the ending which reflects desires of Orsino and Olivia. They obtain their Cesario in the last scene even if everyone notices that Viola and Sebastian are twins and that they are not actually

a boy page Cesario. The play ends while the twins' real identities are ignored by everyone.

The previous section explained that Viola and Sebastian are twins and that they are in a mirroring relationship. Furthermore Viola and Olivia have some mirroring similarities as explained in Douglas H. Parker's "Shakespeare's Female Twin in *Twelfth Night*: In Defence of Olivia." First, he states the conformity of their background; "both have experienced the death of fathers; both think they have experienced the recent death of brothers" (25). Then, he mentions that they are similar because both are in disguise; Viola disguises herself as Cesario, but Olivia's veil is also "an obvious sign of her mourning", and it can be said "a type of disguise" (25). Moreover, he refers to the parallel of their love situations between them that their "apparently hopeless love relationships work themselves out satisfactorily for Viola and Olivia" (32). He notes the similarity as follows: "This is only the most obvious example of mirroring" (32). In addition, as Anne Barton pointed out, that their names are anagrammatic proves their mirror relationship is intended by Shakespeare (122). The above instances demonstrate how they are close to identical.

Olivia's camouflage is not only the sign of mourning, but also the act of masking the same as Viola's. Her disguise is the external signal of lamenting over her brother's death, and also the sign to refuse Orsino's proposal. Therefore, she actually does not lead a life such as Valentine suggests, "like a cloistress she will veiled walk, / And water once a day her chamber round / With eye-offending brine; . . ." (I. i. 28-30). Naturally she keeps to the house and wears the veil, yet she soon removes her veil when she encounters Cesario, and she discloses her love for her/him. And then, what she shows to Cesario is her natural beauty.

O sir, I will not be so hard-hearted: I will give out divers schedules of my beauty. It shall be inventoried and every particle and utensil labelled to my will, as, *item*, two lips, indifferent red; *item*, two grey eyes, with lids to them; *item*, one neck, one chin, and so forth. Were you sent hither to 'praise me? (I. v. 200-204)

The showing of Olivia's own bare beauty is the first step of love for Olivia, and it shows how important the appearance is for her. Her disguise makes a fictitious figure for Orsino, and it produces his fancy love for her. With the veil which suggests her sorrow, she performs the character who has tender feelings for her brother, and also performs the character who shuts her mind to any men. It can be said she has that gap between outer appearance and inner mind like Viola. Her disguise, however, is temporary, and she can sometimes put it on with her own will as she says, "Give me my veil; come throw it o'er my face" (I. v. 137) and sometimes take it off: "but we will draw the curtain and show you the picture" (I. v. 190-191). Her gap between outer appearance and inner mind does not torment her.

On the other hand, Viola's disguise causes her confusion between her appearance and internal mind, because she is a girl even if she disguises herself as a boy. In Act III, she swears to Olivia:

By innocence I swear, and by my youth,
I have one heart, one bosom, and one truth,
And that no woman has; nor never none
Shall mistress be of it, save I alone. (III. i. 142-45)

Her inner mind is that of a woman surely, so she certainly cannot be satisfied with Olivia's love because both are females. The purpose of her disguise is to protect her from the dangers of at an unknown place: "[I] might not be delivered to the world / Till I had made mine own occasion mellow / What my estate is!" (I. ii. 42-44). Therefore her disguise is inevitable, and it causes her suffering because she cannot avoid it. For example, she cannot stop the emotion of love for her master Orsino even though she disguises herself as a boy page. Orsino loves Olivia, but Viola is sent to tell his love to Olivia's house against her feeling. Therefore she tells aside like "Yet a barful strife, / Whoe'er I woo, myself would be his wife" (I. iv. 40-41). But Olivia, who is loved by Orsino, loves Cesario who is actually Viola, and she makes Malvolio pursue Cesario to give her/him her ring. When Viola gets the ring, she realizes that Olivia loves Cesario who is, in fact, herself:

She loves me, sure; the cunning of her passion
Invites me in this churlish messenger.
None of my lord's ring? Why, he sent her none;
I am the man; if it be so, as 'tis,
Poor lady, she were better love a dream. (II. ii. 19-23)

At once, she discovers that her love for Orsino is as impossible as Olivia's love. The sigh of poor Olivia who falls in love with the "poor monster" (II. ii. 31) is "thrifless" (II. ii. 36). And in the case of Viola who disguises herself as a page, her "state is desperate" (II. ii. 34) for her master's love. She takes a pessimistic view for her love when she reflects Olivia's love to herself. Parker says that "Both women must also endure unrequited love" (27). Thus, their relationship can be regarded as an inner mirror relation because Viola realizes that her own love is also fruitless as long as she assumes her disguise through the love of Olivia. The hopeless love relationships are all consequences Viola's disguise.

To solve their complex love situations and their disguises, Viola needs to meet with Sebastian. But it is a miracle for everyone, because both twins believe the other is dead, and of course the Illyrian people don't know they are twins. In Act V, scene i, when everybody notices that Viola and Sebastian are twins, Orsino says as follows:

One face, one voice, one habit, and two persons—
A natural perspective, that is and is not. (V. i. 200-201)

Antonio is also astonished to see them:

How have you made division of yourself?
An apple cleft in two is not more twin
Then these two creatures. (V. i. 206-208)

For others, Viola and Sebastian are surprising creatures who have the same appearance,

though they have two separate characters. People only see the appearance of persons as I mentioned in section I, and therefore they cannot find the inner differences of their minds in this scene. It is clear that they think Viola and Sebastian are two same persons or one person who divided into two persons like an apple which is cleft in two. As the above quotations show, Orsino and Antonio do not realize the inner differences between Viola and Sebastian. Thus, this unusual way of perception of the Illyrians is the most important point when we consider the problem of the personalities of Viola, Sebastian and Cesario.

Thanks to the encounter between Viola and Sebastian, their tangled relationships are resolved. Though the truth was revealed, however, the personality of Cesario which originates from the mistakes by each people has remained upon the stage until the end. For example, Orsino keeps calling Viola as Cesario until the play ends. And Shakespeare did not describe the scene in which Viola will be "Orsino's mistress, and his fancy's queen," (V. i. 365) after all. Ultimately Viola does not change into her feminine dress. It suggests the possibility that "Orsino is betrothed to Viola because he likes her when she was a boy" (Huston 288). Besides, Sebastian keeps taking on the mask of Cesario unconsciously by the end of the play, because he is not called as his name Sebastian even by his fiancée Olivia. That is to say, the emergence of Sebastian is a magical phenomenon as if Cesario was split into two for the Illyrian people. Finally, Cesario's personality still exists upon the stage even when Viola, Orsino, Olivia and Sebastian are happily paired off at the end of the play.

The "glass" reflects the encounter between Viola and Sebastian, and reflects their real situations and their inner minds, but Orsino and Olivia do not realize this. Therefore the true state is twisted to suit the desires of Orsino and Olivia, and they each choose their "Cesario" who is not the person who they had loved at first. Their inner mirrors just reflect their desires and their hope to get partners who are suitable for their tastes. Finally, Viola's and Sebastian's identity remain confused with Cesario's, and the character of Cesario exists until the end of the play.

Conclusion

For the Illyrian people, the most important things are what are reflected in their eyes and they seem to admit only arbitrary things. This may cause Orsino, Olivia and also Malvolio to believe that their courtships will succeed and that they have perfect confidences in their loves. They interpret their real situations to adopt their desires like self-images in a mirror. Therefore both Orsino and Olivia accept the settlement of their love problems and their partners easily. They do not mind about the past fact that Orsino loved Olivia, and that Olivia loved Cesario as Viola. They only see what they imagine are suitable images of Cesario, who is shown in front of them. Orsino becomes engaged with a woman who is not Olivia, but “turned” him “into a hart” (I. i. 21), and also Olivia is engaged to a man who is not Cesario, but whom she gives “five-fold blazon” (I. v. 248), but they are oblivious of their former loves.

For Viola and Sebastian, this ending is only a “flood of fortune” (IV. iii. 11), so both of them just rejoice at the happiness. However, Viola and Sebastian do not notice the existence of the personality of Cesario, because they naturally know their inner differences. Therefore there is still a gap between the twins’ and other people’s acceptance of Viola’s and Sebastian’s identities when the play ends.

In conclusion, through this analysis, I have shown how the Illyrian people are more affected by the appearance of a person than the person’s inner mind. They perceive individual persons with each outer appearance and create their own images of who they see. So the identities of each personality differ according to each viewpoint. Viola’s real identity which is hidden under her disguise is revealed by the meeting with her twin brother Sebastian, but Orsino and Olivia accept Viola and Sebastian arbitrarily. They are divided into two persons according to the preferences of Orsino and Olivia. It can be said that the play ends along their hopes to get their satisfactory images “Cesario.”

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